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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: PRM ADMISSIONS OFFICE DIRECTOR MEETINGS IN BANGKOK

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR SUSAN SUTTON, REASON 1.4 (B,D).

11. (C) Summary. End summary.

12. (C) During a December 4-8 visit to Bangkok, PRM Office of Admissions Director Terry Rusch met with DHS, UNHCR, CDC, IOM, and ROK Embassy officials to discuss refugee issues. She discussed current refugee processing issues with Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) staff and toured the OPE facility. She also met with the Thai Ministry of Interior and with North Korean refugees at two facilities.

Meeting with Ministry of Interior

13. (U) In a December 7 meeting with Ministry of Interior (MOI) Deputy Permanent Secretary Priraphol Tritasavit, Rusch described how large-scale U.S. refugee resettlement processing in Asia was now focused on Thailand. She expressed appreciation for RTG assistance on Burmese refugee processing and said that the USG hoped to resettle about 15,000 refugees from Thailand during the current fiscal year. She provided the current state of play on the material support issue. Rusch requested that the RTG create a streamlined and predictable mechanism for the issuance of exit permits for U.S. refugee family reunification cases (Visas 93 and P3 cases). She noted that the U.S. had a backlog of such cases that numbered about 50 persons. This number would only grow larger in the future as U.S refugee processing of Burmese accelerated.

14. (C) Rusch stated that the U.S. wanted to process the small number of North Korean refugees in Thailand who indicated interest in U.S. resettlement. She said the USG hoped the RTG would allow processing of additional North Korean cases. The USG was committed to discreet handling of such cases though it could not control all the actors, such as NGOs, involved in the North Korea refugee issue. The USG believed that the estimates of large numbers of North Koreans in China were too high. Rusch said that it was important that North Korean refugees have accurate information about the U.S. refugee program. To this end, she said she had met with two groups of North Korean refugees in Bangkok.

15. (C) Priraphol noted the points about North Korean refugees but did not respond substantively. He noted that the MOI was limited in what it could do on exit permits for family reunification cases. The Thai National Security Council set guidelines that MOI had to work within. While it was possible to get exit permits for special humanitarian cases in certain instances, the number of such cases would be limited. It was important, therefore, to put in place a formal mechanism for the handling of such cases. Priraphol recommended that lists of family reunification cases be presented to MOI in Bangkok. MOI would then work with provincial governors to set up meetings of the local

Provincial Admissions Boards (PABs). The PABs would screen the cases, and if they were approved, this would open the way for exit permits and departures of the family reunification cases.

Meetings with North Korean Refugees

¶16. (C) Rusch visited the Thai immigration detention Center (IDC) on December 6 with the local head of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Tom Coughlin, Deputy Refugee Coordinator Jessica Adler and Embassy spouse interpreter Nancy Porter to observe conditions for North Korean refugees at the Immigration Detention Center (IDC). JRS is the only NGO with RTG permission to provide detainees at the IDC with medical assistance. JRS reported overcrowding almost three times IDC's normal capacity. With recent Thai police raids on the South Korean shelter for North Koreans, there are currently 207 North Koreans detained at the center, of which 25 have expressed interest in resettlement to the U.S. Although each room were at maximum capacity, the delegation observed that NK detainees had access to toilet and shower facilities; one NK woman was in the process of dyeing her hair. In general, the NKs appeared to be adequately cared for by JRS and the RTG. NGO food vendors were even allowed to sell food to detainees.

¶17. (U) Rusch met with the North Koreans at the IDC and at the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) who are interested in U.S. resettlement and to clarify misunderstandings about the U.S. refugee program. In both town-hall-like meetings, the refugees asked for absolute guarantees that they will be accepted into the USG program and repeatedly asked about the speed of USG processing. One woman at the IDC reported her understanding from various media articles that the USG is obligated to accept every North Korean refugee. Rusch stated that the USG is committed to assisting North Korean refugees but the Act does not guarantee acceptance into the program. Rusch then described the current state of USG processing of North Koreans in Thailand and reiterated the uncertainty of receiving additional RTG permission to process additional cases. Rusch stated that the information provided was meant to help the refugees better decide between going to the ROK or to the U.S.

¶18. (U) Comment: It was evident from meetings at the IDC and YWCA that there exists many misconceptions and misunderstandings regarding the U.S. Resettlement Program (USRP) among the North Korean refugees. Some factors attributing to this is misinformation stems from the media, internet, non-governmental organizations and missionary groups with interests in moving North Koreans to the ROK or another third country such as the U.S. More information campaign concerning the USRP is required in order to reduce NK misconceptions and assist them to make an informed decision to either resettle in ROK or the U.S.
HANSEN